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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 4 June 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

later: Mr. JASIŃSKI (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued)

(a) ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR 1990 AND PROGRAMME-LEVEL ACTIVITIES (continued) (DP/1991/28, Parts I-III; DP/1991/30, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35)

1. Mr. MOYE (United Kingdom) said that he welcomed the excellent report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (DP/1991/28, Parts I-III). UNFPA had demonstrated a clear commitment to dealing with matters concerning women, population and development, and most donor agencies were attempting to increase gender awareness and to incorporate women's concerns into all development activities. Although some UNFPA executing agencies did not place enough emphasis on women's issues, the participation of women on the staff of UNFPA was an important achievement.

2. He also commended the important work undertaken by UNFPA in the field of environment, population and development. His Government fully supported the efforts to ensure that population issues were an integral part of the agenda of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The UNFPA study on contraceptive requirements rightly emphasized the importance of adequate supplies of contraceptives in the 1990s. In that context, he was pleased that UNFPA had shifted its focus from global principles to practical measures at the country level.

3. Although he would defer specific comments on the proposed UNFPA successor arrangements for agency support costs to a later stage, he noted that his Government's overriding concern in that respect was to maintain the impact of UNFPA technical assistance. He welcomed all efforts to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of UNFPA aid. With respect to the strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, he was pleased to note that encouraging progress had been made in many countries of the region and that resources for UNFPA assistance would be increased. It was important, however, that population assistance programmes should be both financially and technically viable, given the existing economic and institutional constraints, and that they should be appropriate, effective, affordable and sustainable.

4. He was concerned about the limited capacity of some field offices to facilitate donor coordination. He wanted to know how UNFPA envisioned its role as the lead agency for coordination, as well as the role of the "followers". In particular, he wished that the report on sub-Saharan Africa had been more explicit on the problems of donor coordination. The report to be issued in 1992 on cooperation between UNFPA and UNICEF would be very useful, and he wondered whether a similar report on cooperation between UNFPA and the World Bank could be issued in 1992 or 1993.

(Mr. Moye, United Kingdom)

5. Cooperation between UNFPA and his Government's Overseas Development Agency had improved, as evidenced by their joint effort in the programme review and strategy development mission to the United Republic of Tanzania. In addition, two UNFPA officials had visited academic institutions in the United Kingdom to assess the possibility of collaboration in the areas of programme development and implementation, training and research. His Government and UNFPA had agreed to hold annual bilateral discussions, and the field offices of the Overseas Development Agency were encouraged to develop closer links with UNFPA field offices. Over half of the Overseas Development Agency staff had benefited from a population awareness course, and one Agency consultant was currently leading the discussions on population and development at the Nairobi conference of United Kingdom ambassadors in East Africa, at which the ambassadors would be encouraged to strengthen their relations with UNFPA field offices.

6. The allocation of resources to population activities was a measure of commitment to population issues. In 1990, his Government's allocation for such activities had been increased by 20 per cent over the previous year; however, it still represented only 1 per cent of the United Kingdom's total overseas assistance. His Government's decision to increase its 1991 contribution to UNFPA by 25 per cent reflected its confidence in the ability of UNFPA to make optimal use of its resources. The Executive Director's projection of a funding increase of 10 per cent per year for UNFPA was a realistic objective, and he urged other donors, particularly the United States of America, to help meet that target.

7. Ultimately, the amount of financial support enjoyed by UNFPA would depend on the concrete results it achieved in the field. Those results had been encouraging in recent years, and his Government would continue to monitor them carefully and to work closely with UNFPA to help achieve its goals.

8. Mr. NISSEN (Observer for Norway) said that Norway would continue to give high priority to population issues, in view of the projected 30 per cent increase in the world's population by the year 2010. In addressing those issues, the relationship between population and environment should be borne in mind; while poverty and population growth had an adverse impact on the environment in developing countries, 75 per cent of global pollution was produced in the developed countries. The diverse needs of individual countries must also be considered, since the overall populations of some countries had exceeded sustainable levels, while those of other countries showed an unfavourable age-distribution due to high fertility rates. Finally, giving people the means to choose the size of their families was a way of ensuring, especially for women, the basic human right of self-determination.

9. In the previous decade, serious population problems had resulted from the large-scale migration of refugees escaping from war famine and environmental deterioration. Population policies and programmes were important factors in solving those problems.

(Mr. Nissen, Observer, Norway)

10. Since the programming and financial aspects of population control posed a great challenge for the international community, his delegation encouraged UNFPA to continue to explore new strategies to achieve the objectives of the Amsterdam Declaration on A Better Life for Future Generations. The financial and administrative implications of UNFPA recommendations to achieve those objectives should be analysed separately. The failure to meet population challenges immediately would increase pressure in other sectors and would have both short- and long-term financial consequences. Many developing countries had a considerable potential for reallocation of resources to address the issue, and developed countries could also play a critical role. International attention to population issues had waned, yet the Amsterdam Declaration had identified a need for an additional $US 4.5 billion in resources by the year 2000. The percentage of official development assistance which Norway channelled to population activities was the highest in the world, and he hoped that other countries would match or exceed that level and that the United States would resume its contributions to UNFPA.

11. It was encouraging to note that the demand for both contraceptives and family services in general was greater than ever. Decreased fertility in all parts of the developing world demonstrated the effectiveness of a demand-oriented strategy emphasizing voluntary contraception. However, the demand for contraceptives created through increased awareness must not remain unsatisfied, and UNFPA had a vital role to play in bridging the gap between supply and demand. His delegation therefore welcomed the initiatives taken on contraceptive requirements, distribution and global coordination, and supported the recommendations of the Executive Director on the pooling of resources and coordination of logistical systems.

12. The advancement of women was closely linked to the availability of family planning services. All women and girls should have access to education so that they could make informed family planning decisions. The results described in the report on the strategy concerning women, population and development (DP/1991/32) were encouraging, as was the fact that 40 per cent of UNFPA staff were women. He hoped that UNFPA would build on its accomplishments so that it could continue to serve as a model for other agencies with respect to women's issues.

13. Mr. JOLLY (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that the close relationship between population issues and child health and survival had resulted in increased collaboration between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNFPA, together with the World Health Organization (WHO). He appreciated the Executive Director's advocacy of population activities as an integral part of primary health care, as well as her leadership in supporting the role of women in the development process. The recently strengthened decentralized country-programme approach which UNFPA shared with UNICEF constituted a solid basis for effective collaboration between the two agencies.

(Mr. Jolly)

14. Current initiatives to create a strong international consensus for human development in order to reverse the set-backs of the 1980s had also helped to promote closer inter-agency collaboration. The executive heads of UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and UNDP had sent to all of their field staff a letter summarizing the agencies' goals and strategies for the 1990s and the operational modalities for common efforts to achieve those priorities. Because it defined both long-term goals and priorities for immediate action on a cooperative basis that would avoid duplication of effort, the letter was perhaps the single most important step taken by the four agencies to encourage a country-level approach to maternal and child health and family planning. At its 1991 session, the UNICEF Executive Board had reaffirmed its commitment to collaboration with UNFPA in that area, and the study of the relationship between the two agencies had yielded new insights and stimulated further action.

15. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children also constituted an important foundation for UNFPA activities. Paragraph 17 of the Plan of Action dealt specifically with family planning and maternal and child health, and the other goals enunciated at the Summit, which had been endorsed by over 150 Governments, were very pertinent to the concerns of UNFPA. UNFPA could and must play a vital role in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217, in which all relevant United Nations bodies were urged to take into account the Declaration and the Plan of Action in carrying out their programmes.

16. The world community should seize the opportunity to build on the new spirit of international cooperation and consensus that had been so evident in the political sphere. UNFPA was an important part of the incipient international mobilization to meet human needs, and UNICEF pledged its cooperation in meeting the challenges of the years ahead.

17. Mr. ANNAN (Controller, United Nations) said that the United Nations had serious difficulties with the UNFPA proposals for successor arrangements for agency support costs. Those difficulties involved substantive, managerial, organizational and financial considerations. He emphasized, however, that the United Nations stronly supported the principles contained in General Assembly resolution 44/211, particularly the need to ensure maximum utilization of national capacity.

18. In negotiating arrangements for support costs, priority must be given to efficient use of resources and effective results. The arrangements should serve the interests of all the parties concerned (such as recipient and donor countries, and executing and funding agencies) in a balanced manner.

19. After a thorough review of the UNFPA proposal, it appeared that significant differences remained unresolved. Instead of addressing the question of successor arrangements for support costs, the system proposed by the Fund was tantamount to establishing an entirely new mechanism, the purpose

(Mr. Annan)

of which seemed to be to alter drastically the delivery of technical assistance in the population field. Under the proposed system, UNFPA would become an executing agency. In its relation with the United Nations, UNFPA should remain a funding agency, and the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development or the regional commissions should continue their roles as executing agencies at the country and regional levels.

20. Member States had decided that the United Nations should play a pre-eminent role in the formulation of population policy long before the Fund had been established. It appeared, however, that the UNFPA proposal sought to assign that role to the Fund. Moreover, the proposal would enable UNFPA to engage in technical activities, thus moving it away from its intended role as a funding agency. Instead of capitalizing on the advantages inherent in the Organization's integration of research and operational activities, the proposal would, if accepted, diminish and fragment existing capabilities.

21. As currently proposed, the concept of "country programme technical support teams" was confusing in so far as UNFPA had not specified how the addition of new layers of technical support would function, and to which organization the technical support teams would be accountable. For example, the proposal did not make clear how a closer link between research and operational activities could be created, and it did not provide for any mechanism to ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to population issues. It was not clear from what source individual team-leaders would receive directives in technical and administrative matters, or how the technical knowledge currently available at the United Nations could be transferred to the countries to be supported by the teams. Finally, with respect to country projects, the proposal did not specify lines of responsibility with respect to day-to-day implementation.

22. Regional commissions had the ability and experience to deal with population matters in the context of regional development issues, and their role in the development process went beyond the core technical back-stopping of UNFPA projects. Further, the work of the regional commissions had a multidisciplinary dimension, which distinguished them from other sectoral agencies. The addition of country programme technical support teams would curtail the involvement of the regional commissions, and there was a real danger that the developmental dimension of population programmes would suffer. At the regional commissions, concern had been expressed that the proposed arrangements might result in proliferation of structures in the United Nations system and have a negative impact on integrated approaches to regional development.

23. In its non-regional activities related to population, the United Nations had played a long-standing role in providing technical support and an appropriate range of administrative and managerial services. To a considerable degree, United Nations structures already fostered an interdisciplinary approach, as well as attention to the broadest possible spectrum of population concerns within an overall development context.

(Mr. Annan)

24. While UNFPA asserted that the rationale for the establishment of country programme technical support teams was greater cost-effectiveness and quality, that should be demonstrated before any radical restructuring of current systems was undertaken. Perhaps the best way to proceed would be for UNFPA to experiment on a pilot basis, perhaps in one subregion alone, in order to determine whether the interdisciplinary team arrangement worked.

25. In putting together its financial plan, UNFPA seemed to imply that there could be an increase in United Nations regular-budget support for population work. In that regard, it was important to recall that any such decision would need to be taken by the General Assembly, and not by the Governing Council. Moreover, within the United Nations, there was already substantial regular-budget support for population. The proposed arrangements would almost certainly create considerable strain, since the United Nations would be requested to provide more services with less financial support.

26. The delivery of technical cooperation required both a technical and an administrative/management component. The Fund had not made any rigorous cost review that could provide guidelines for the optimum ratio between technical and administrative staff. In the light of the Organization's current financial constraints, the Fund's proposal regarding financial arrangements was not realistic. The proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 did not provide for potential increases in the Organization's regular-budget support in the field of population to offset decreased UNFPA support. A shortfall in available funds could impede the implementation of a number of activities and, consequently, disrupt the population programme as a whole.

27. The Fund should establish more clearly, and in further detail, the actual modalities that would demonstrate not only that the new approach could function effectively, but also that it would represent an improvement to the current system. Any major change in the existing system would require the elaboration of a carefully phased transition period, which was clearly lacking in the current UNFPA proposal.

28. The United Nations questioned the wisdom of forging ahead with a major realignment or rearrangement of the current system without the agreement of all the major partners. At the least, the proponents of the UNFPA proposal must ensure its acceptance by the partners that were expected to help implement the proposed changes successfully. It would, perhaps, be more prudent to encourage UNFPA and its partners to continue their negotiations and to submit revised joint recommendations in 1992; that approach was much more likely to ensure that the change would be a successful and productive one.

29. Mr. JASIŃSKI (Poland) said that the current positive changes in international political relations created a favourable environment for the full application of the achievements of scientific and technological progress and of the experience of the United Nations in the field of technical cooperation to population problems. Perhaps the Administration could consider ways and means of encouraging the public and private sectors to increase their financial contributions to the Fund and to participate in it more actively.

30. One of the three main tasks for the decade ahead should be the allocation of adequate resources to operational programmes designed to make population an integral part of the development process. His delegation hoped that the Interregional Training Workshop on the Use of Population Projects for Socio-economic Programming, which had been conducted successfully at the Warsaw School of Economics, under the auspices of UNFPA and the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development with participants from developing countries, would be included in the interregional programme for 1992-1995. While it was understandable that the Workshop had to be temporarily suspended in 1991 because of budgetary constraints, his delegation hoped that it would be reinstated in 1992.

31. His delegation was grateful to the Fund for conducting its recent mission to Poland at a time when that country was experiencing a difficult period of economic transition. He hoped that the findings of the mission would enable the Fund, and others wishing to provide assistance, to elaborate effective and urgent measures for the solution of Poland's acute population problems.

32. His delegation wished to reconfirm its support for UNFPA and its management. Poland was willing to share its expertise and experience with the Fund and with other interested countries, and hoped that the next edition of the Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance would contain references to relevant Polish organizations, university centres, and research and training institutions. The Fund should take advantage of the facilities offered by the new UNDP office in Warsaw, with a view to expanding its mutually advantageous cooperation with Poland.

33. With regard to the question of successor arrangements for agency support costs, as outlined in document DP/1991/35, the three-prong arrangement combining national expertise, country programme technical support teams and headquarters specialists/coordinators seemed to be in keeping with current trends in the United Nations technical cooperation programmes. However, a small technical support team would also be necessary for the European region, in view of the acute substantive and managerial problems in recipient countries of that region. Moreover, his delegation understood that, in order to ensure impartiality, national experts would receive contracts and remuneration from the Fund for their services.

34. Mrs. CORVALAN (Observer for Chile) citing a study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) with the collaboration of UNDP and UNFPA, on the scope of poverty in Latin America during the 1980s, said that while poverty indices had improved in most of the region during that period, the number of people living in poverty and the number of indigent people in Chile had increased substantially. That situation was a matter of concern all Chileans, particularly in view of the coexistence of very modern sectors and larger, backward and extremely impoverished sectors.

35. Her Government was striving to ensure genuine development through economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. To that end, it was important to carry out development projects which promoted economic growth, sought to combat marginality, unemployment, underemployment, and lack of access to nutrition and basic services, and encouraged respect for the environment and natural resources. Her country attached priority to the participation of women in economic, social and cultural projects. Environmental degradation, which was a major problem among the marginal population of urban centres, was compounded by a lack of awareness and planning in that sphere.

36. The report of the Executive Director of UNFPA showed that Latin America and the Caribbean did not receive an adequate share of the Fund's resources. In the case of Chile, the support received was far below what was needed during the 1990s. Accordingly, it was imperative to revise the modified criteria used in designating priority countries to include variables pertaining to the environment and social equity.

37. She stressed the importance of cooperation between UNFPA, the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) and ECLAC in order to help countries to identify development-oriented population policies. Her delegation also attached importance to cooperation between UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and UNFPA to that same end. Chile was pleased that UNFPA endeavoured to take full account of the interests of women at the various stages of programme implementation, despite the fact that only 3.9 per cent of the Fund's programme resources were allocated for that purpose.

38. While it certainly was true that international cooperation was a complement to, and not a substitute for, national development efforts, a decrease in such support would seriously undermine national efforts, thus requiring even more resources in the future.

39. Her delegation looked forward to the forthcoming visit to Chile by the Executive Director of UNFPA, and hoped that it would be possible to identify more clearly ways in which the Fund could assist Chile in the coming years.

40. Mr. POPESCU (Romania) said that the state of world population in 1990 was clearly different from what it had been in 1969, when the Fund had begun its activity. One important achievement had been the understanding of population problems and their solution. The first World Population Conference, held at Bucharest in 1974, had led to the general recognition of the importance of population factors in economic and social development. His delegation was pleased that countries throughout the world had come to recognize the important role that population variables played in all aspects of social and economic development.

41. Romania attached great importance to its cooperation with UNFPA, and the revolution that had taken place in Romania in December 1989 had opened new and broader prospects for developing and diversifying that cooperation. Romania's 1991 contribution to the Fund, which had been paid in March 1991, represented an increase of 250 per cent.

42. In 1990, UNFPA, in cooperation with WHO and the United Nations, had negotiated, drafted, approved and begun the implementation of two projects in Romania. One project concerned family planning, while the other involved preparatory activities for a population census to be carried out in early 1992. A UNFPA mission had recently visited Romania for three weeks to review and analyse national population policy and population-related development objectives and programmes, and to prepare a strategic framework for an external assistance programme. The mission had made appropriate recommendations for multilateral and bilateral assistance in the fields of basic data analysis and surveys; maternal and child health and family planning; information, education and communication; and women in development. Romania looked forward to an early follow-up to that mission.

43. While his delegation supported the Executive Director's recommendations contained in the work plan for 1992-1995 (DP/1991/30), it would have preferred a regional breakdown of country activities in tables H, I and J by geographical region rather than on the basis of UNFPA divisions at headquarters. Romania endorsed the Executive Director's recommendations for the approval of the proposed 14 comprehensive country programmes, the subregional programme and the intercountry programme for 1992-1995.

44. The biennial budget estimates (DP/1991/36) were well prepared, and the Executive Director had kept her proposals to a minimum. The positive report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) reflected the soundness of the proposed biennial budget, which his delegation supported together with the recommendations of ACABQ.

45. Mr. MAYORGA-CORTES (Nicaragua) said that the report of the Executive Director (DP/1991/28, Parts I-III) showed that, despite strenuous efforts to limit its growth, the world's population would increase by 1 billion during the 1990s. The situation of the 42 least developed countries was particularly difficult, as their population would double in the next 25 years. While it was encouraging to note the progress made in some African and Asian countries, the general situation of sub-Saharan Africa continued to be extremely critical, both in terms of food requirements and of the link between rapid population growth and the quality of the environment.

46. With regard to the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, the growing political support for population programmes and the open discussion of population issues were encouraging signs. Nevertheless, he was concerned at the reduction, from 13 to 11 per cent in 1990, in the Fund's total planned expenditure for the region and in the resources for family planning, which had decreased from 50.2 per cent in 1989 to 43.5 per cent in 1990.

47. Nicaragua welcomed the fact that the Fund had given priority to mobilizing resources. The maternal and child health and family planning programmes initiated in his country in 1985 had produced valuable results, which the new Government of Nicaragua proposed to broaden and to enhance in the next few years.

48. In that context, he underscored the importance which his country attached to the programme review and strategy development missions. Nicaragua was preparing to host such a mission in the near future, as it was necessary to evaluate the impact on its programmes of recent developments, including the return of more than 200,000 refugees and displaced persons and the absorption into the workforce of more than 60,000 demobilized troops.

49. The success of Nicaragua's efforts in the population field would depend upon its capacity for internal coordination and on coordination among the various United Nations agencies, especially UNDP and UNICEF. His delegation was pleased to note the awareness which existed within the Fund, WHO, UNICEF and UNDP with regard to maternal and child health and family planning, as shown by the document signed by the heads of those four agencies in February 1991.

50. Drawing attention to document DP/1991/32, he noted with satisfaction that the resources allocated by the Fund to issues concerning women, population and development had increased by 82 per cent in 1990. In his view, research activities and consultations on the subject of women in development should be intensified and should, to the extent possible, take into account the specific characteristics of regions or subregions. Training should receive a high priority; he therefore expressed gratitude to those countries and non-governmental organizations which had supported the organization of training courses and seminars on that topic.

(Mr. Mayorga-Cortés, Nicaragua)

51. He also expressed support for two multicountry projects which were being carried out in Central America: a project initiated in 1990 with the support of ECLAC and CELADE to assist Latin American countries in developing information systems to track displaced populations, and a seminar which would be held in El Salvador in 1991, with the support of that country's Ministry of Education, for the purpose of exchanging ideas and experiences and establishing effective arrangements for technical cooperation among developing countries.

52. At the end of 1990, a meeting held been held at San José, Costa Rica, at which the Fund's officials and experts involved in programmes and projects in Latin America and the Caribbean analysed their experiences. The participants had agreed on the need to improve the Fund's strategies in the future, in terms of cost and effectiveness. Nicaragua supported such evaluation exercises, and recommended that their conclusions should be discussed with the countries concerned.

53. In the past decade, his country had endured one of the worst crises in its history. It was estimated that, at the beginning of 1990, the per capita gross domestic product had been only $480. That figure was indicative of the deterioration in the standard of living of the Nicaraguan people, a situation which placed Nicaragua among the ranks of the least developed. Accordingly, he urged the Fund to make an evaluation of the critical situation in his country, and if possible, to give priority to its programmes in Nicaragua.

54. Mr. TABAH (France) said that he wished to place on record his delegation's concern at the slow distribution of documents in French. For instance, he had received document DP/1991/35 only a few days earlier, and in English, so that he had been unable to discuss it with his Government before the opening of the current session.

55. Turning to the report of the Executive Director of UNFPA (DP/1991/28, Parts I-III), he noted with approval the diversity of the Fund's operations and the strengthening of its indirect activities, without which family planning could not be established on a lasting basis. His delegation had always held that greater emphasis should be placed on motivating individuals rather than on merely urging them to use family planning methods. Family planning services should continue to receive a high priority in the allocation of the Fund's resources.

56. Since the status of women was a primary factor in changing reproductive behaviour, he welcomed the allocation of substantial resources to that issue, especially in Africa. Improving the status of women required the cooperation of other agencies, and especially non-governmental organizations, which were in the best position to deal with the question of women's rights. In that context, it was regrettable that literacy rates had fallen in Africa, especially for girls, a fact which did not bode well for the effort to change behaviour.

(Mr. Tabah, France)

57. He noted with satisfaction the efforts made by the Executive Director to ensure that demographic factors were fully taken into account by the organizers of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was regrettable that experts on the environment had hitherto regarded population as an independent and exogenous factor. According to United Nations estimates, the world's population would be approximately 7.5 billion by 2025, a figure six times higher than the current population of the industrialized countries. The international community had only 35 years in which to prepare for the consequences of unprecedented population growth and industrial development. That implied a collective responsibility, not just for the rich countries but also for the poor ones. However, the poor countries did not possess the technological and financial means of repairing damage to the environment. It was to be hoped that the Executive Director and her colleagues would support research on the relationship between population and the environment, as a vast methological gap remained to be filled.

58. He endorsed the decision to give priority to Africa in the allocation of resources. By 2025, nearly all Asian countries with the exception of Pakistan, and nearly all of Latin America and North Africa, would have birth rates under 2.5 per cent. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of a handful of countries, the fertility levels would be much higher. While a consensus existed among the Governments of African countries on the need for action to slow population growth, there was still a great distrust of family planning among their peoples, and it was an illusion to think that attitudes could be changed by rhetoric alone. Greater emphasis should be placed on incentives for reducing child-bearing. Moreover, structural adjustment policies were often counterproductive in that they eliminated free maternal and child health and family planning services. He urged the Executive Director to assign a group of experts to investigate the demographic consequences of structural adjustment.

59. In 1990, his Government had offered to extend multi-bilateral assistance in the population field to those countries which requested it; to date, no replies had been forthcoming. France was prepared to contribute to the Fund's activities at a level comparable to that of its European partners and in a manner consistent with its overall development assistance efforts.

60. Preparations were currently being made for a conference on growth and population in Africa, to be held in Paris from 2 to 6 September 1991, in collaboration with the Fund and the World Bank. Approximately 250 participants were expected. The final round-table discussion on international cooperation in Africa would be presided over by the Executive Director.

61. Mr. Jasiński (Poland) took the Chair.

62. Mr. BAITCHEV (Bulgaria) said that population variables, whether they related to growth, migration, urbanization or ageing, were among the central concerns of all development strategies, as they had a direct bearing on human resources development and thus on overall economic growth. From that point of view, his country attached special importance to cooperation with the Fund and had always supported its activities. Bulgaria was trying to bring its population policies into line with its new socio-economic priorities. In that effort, it hoped to be able to rely on future cooperation with the Fund.

63. He noted with satisfaction the Fund's recognition of the close link between population issues and sustainable development. Another question which deserved careful consideration was the need for population variables to be taken explicitly into account in connection with environmental issues. He endorsed the view that population factors should receive the requisite attention at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

64. He also welcomed the fact that issues such as population growth, changes in population patterns, international migration, population distribution, women, the relationship between population and development, and family planning policies were included in the agenda of the Internation Conference on Population and Development scheduled to be held in 1994. Bulgaria fully supported the goals of the Conference and was ready to participate actively in its preparation.

65. In his view, Governments should play a leading role in coordination, which must be based on common goals and strategies. Other important factors, such as local conditions and traditions, should also be taken into consideration. He stressed the multisectoral nature of population activities, and welcomed the cooperation between the Fund and other United Nations agencies. He attached particular importance to the joint efforts made by the Fund and WHO to cope with the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic. For the medium and longer terms, he emphasized the importance of the goals and strategies established by the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-first Century, held at Amsterdam in 1989, which had again confirmed the need to integrate population concerns into other development activities.

66. Lastly, the Fund's 20 years of experience had proved beyond a doubt that political commitment at the national, regional and international levels was the primary ingredient in programme success, and that well-crafted national population plans and programmes were needed in order to provide a framework for action.

67. Mr. ABDULLAH (Malaysia), recalling General Assembly resolution 45/216, underscored the significant role which UNFPA would continue to play in the social and economic development of countries. Population growth should be commensurate with the level of development and the sustainable capacity of a nation to ensure, at the very least, a decent standard of living for its population. Accordingly, sound population policies should be an important consideration in overall development planning. He also stressed the urgency of achieving a balance between population, resources, environment and development.

68. His delegation welcomed the comprehensive report of the Executive Director of UNFPA for 1990 (DP/1991/28, Parts I-III) and urged the Fund to continue to emphasize the priority programme areas reflected therein. Those were areas in which UNFPA had developed a comparative edge and special competence. While his delegation welcomed the Fund's involvement in other areas, particularly those listed under special programme interests, it felt that it was important to guard against possible duplication of efforts. Nevertheless, his delegation recognized that UNFPA's collaborative activities with specialized agencies of the United Nations system would add a new dimension to its experience in addressing population problems.

69. The publications of UNFPA, particularly the annual report entitled State of World Population, provided a rich source of data for cross-country referencing and multidisciplinary analyses. However, the sectoral agencies providing the data had reported some lack of consistency in the information presented, and the data therefore should be validated by those agencies before the report was published. The Fund should also consider producing a compendium containing extracts or the main findings of the various research studies which it undertook, thereby further promoting the exchange of information on demographic issues. Technical assistance to upgrade the quality of population publications, particularly in the developing countries, also should be considered.

70. His delegation emphasized that the Fund's continued support in Asia and the Pacific was essential given the region's rapid population growth and the great diversity of the population. While population programmes designed to decelerate population growth should be continued, the qualitative aspect of population should also be given due consideration. Intercountry workshops would be useful to encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience and foster a fruitful exchange of researchers and project officials among participating countries. Technical cooperation among concerned countries in the region merited greater support. His delegation endorsed UNFPA's strategy in addressing issues relating to women, population and development.

71. Certain guiding principles must be observed as the international community sought to develop an overall strategy for improving the world's socio-economic development framework. UNFPA should in all circumstances respect the right of a country to determine its own policies and programmes, and his delegation welcomed the efforts of UNFPA to hold extensive

(Mr. Abdullah, Malaysia)

consultations with Governments in the process of formulating country programmes. UNFPA should also strive to strengthen, and increase the utilization of, relevant national institutions and expertise when implementing its programmes.

72. The financial resources of UNFPA must be expanded if the Fund was to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to it by the international community. His delegation supported the call in the Amsterdam Declaration on A Better Life for Future Generations for a doubling of financial assistance for population programmes from the current level of $4.5 billion to $9 billion by the year 2000. His delegation fervently hoped that the end of the cold war coupled with the aspirations for a new world order would provide impetus to donors to contribute the required financial resources. For its part, UNFPA should strive to provide high-quality, cost-effective services.

73. Mr. AHMED (Observer for Bangladesh), said that notwithstanding the notable progress achieved in recent decades in the field of population control, unless future fertility rates decreased, the world population at the end of the year 2025 might reach the staggering figure of 9.4 billion. The developing countries would experience 95 per cent of that population growth, and their burgeoning population was the greatest threat to their economic development efforts. Despite their severe economic problems, those countries continued to address the population problem through comprehensive multisectoral population programmes. Expanded and accelerated support for family planning programmes on the part of the international community was therefore of critical importance. In that connection, he welcomed the useful report on contraceptive requirements and demand for contraceptive commodities in developing countries in the 1990s (DP/1991/34), urged the Fund to initiate a response to the anticipated demand for contraceptives, with particular emphasis on local production, and expressed support for the proposed work plan for 1992-1995.

74. UNFPA to gear itself up to meet the challenges before it, and was confident that the Fund's efforts to strengthen its capacity to integrate women in its programmes would make those programmes more effective. The Fund should strengthen its capacity for programme delivery through policy and programme coordination, staff training and evaluation, and it should pay more attention to efficiency, cost-effectiveness, financial discipline and accountability. UNFPA also should make increased use of the capacities of the countries where its programmes were carried out, encourage technical cooperation among developing countries and strengthen its field offices, granting them increased authority through the decentralization process. Field offices should be authorized to approve projects above the $500,000 level. The Fund's implementation strategy should be strengthened. In that connection, his delegation noted the improvement in the programme review and strategy development approach to population programme development.

(Mr. Ahmed, Observer, Bangladesh)

75. In view of the clearly established link between population and environment, his delegation was confident that UNFPA would adequately reflect that link at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It also was pleased to note that preparations for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development were proceeding satisfactorily.

76. In view of Asia's large population and high growth rate, appropriate priority must continue to be given to population programmes in the region. His country had identified population growth as its number one development challenge and, with the assistance of UNFPA and other bilateral and multilateral development partners, had undertaken an ambitious population control programme, which was yielding positive results. As a country which had experienced more than its due share of natural disasters, including the recent devastating cyclone which had claimed more than 125,000 lives, it was well aware of the consequences of overpopulation and the fragile balance between population and nature. His delegation hoped that continued assistance would be available as it embarked on the long and arduous path ahead.

77. Bangladesh welcomed the UNFPA strategies for further strengthening programme development in priority countries. It felt that the current system of designating priority countries was working well, and hoped that the target of concentrating 80 per cent of the Fund's country programme resources on those countries would be reached shortly. His delegation was concerned that allocations to priority countries had decreased from 76.5 per cent in 1989 to 74.1 per cent in 1990, requested the Secretariat to explain the reason for the decline, and urged the Fund to take urgent steps to redress the situation. It also was to be hoped that the needs of the least developed countries in the field of population would be adequately addressed by the international community.

78. In conclusion, his delegation noted with satisfaction the expansion of the Fund's programme to meet population challenges throughout the world.

79. Ms. SUNYAKOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the improvement of the Fund's financial situation should result in a more efficient and balanced utilization of resources. In that respect, serious consideration should be given to the modalities of the Fund's cooperation with specialized agencies and departments of the United Nations Secretariat in the implementation of projects. Universal formulas were not acceptable; particularly dangerous was a lack of coordination at the administrative level, which could hinder the implementation of projects that were already being carried out successfully with the participation of experts from various agencies.

80. Her delegation commended the work of the Fund in providing assistance to Africa, and welcomed the increase in the Fund's allocations to projects in African countries.

(Ms. Sunyakova, USSR)

81. The improved international situation opened up new prospects for the Fund, which could become one of the channels for the effective utilization of the resources released from the reduction of military expenditure.

82. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant had brought to light the need for reforms in the implementation of population policies not only in the USSR, but in the entire European region. The principal task was to develop a population policy that would help restore normal conditions for the reproduction of populations in contaminated regions. It was also necessary to collect and analyse data on the demographic consequences of the Chernobyl accident, with the assistance of foreign experts, and to organize an international seminar to analyse the impact of the accident on the reproduction of the population, and draft recommendations on the implementation of population policy measures in extreme conditions of environmental disasters.

83. The Fund should give more attention to the development of human resources. Particularly important were such issues as the deformation of the demographic structure of a population; shortage of human resources and, in particular, of skilled personnel; the unfavourable trend towards the ageing of populations; the phenomenon of depopulation; and negative trends in internal and external migration. Those population problems were specifically reflected in the contradictory social and demographic development of countries of Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

84. The Soviet Union's participation in UNFPA had facilitated the holding of international seminars in the USSR, such as the seminar on population and development planning, held in Riga in December 1989, and the international seminar on the prevention of abortions, held in Tbilisi in October 1990. At the opening of the seminar in Tbilisi, the Executive Director of UNFPA had met with the Chairman of the Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on Women, the Family and Population Policy, and had been informed about new Soviet legislation on the protection of the family, motherhood and childhood, and about the Committee's efforts to carry out a population policy through State and social organizations at the Union and Republic levels. A seminar on the participation of women in the development process and the implementation of family planning programmes was scheduled to take place in Moscow at the end of the year.

85. The demographic situation in the USSR was characterized by contradictory trends. The Soviet Union was concerned at the continuing high mortality rate among the working population, the high infant mortality rate, the large number of abortions, negative trends in internal migration, and increased emigration from the USSR. With respect to emigration from the USSR, a number of institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR planned to hold an international conference on migration in June 1991.

(Ms. Sunyakova, USSR)

86. As part of the Soviet Union's increasing cooperation with UNFPA, Progress Publishers had printed 10,000 copies of a Russian-language edition of the Executive Director's report entitled The State of the World Population: 1990. She hoped that the Soviet Union would be able to continue such cooperation and, in particular, to publish UNFPA materials in little-known Eastern languages.

87. Mr. BABBINGTON (Australia) noted that human pressures were increasing on forests, soil and land, causing ecosystems to collapse under otherwise normal stresses, and that competition for land and natural resources caused people to live in those marginal, disaster-prone areas, leaving them more vulnerable to natural forces. The death and suffering caused by the recent cyclone in Bangladesh was a stark example of that pattern. Land and environmental degradation also resulted in increasingly large migrations of displaced persons.

88. While population growth was not the sole cause of such problems, the strength of the correlation could not be denied. The progress made by UNFPA in slowing population growth in order to achieve the goal of sustainable development was therefore commendable, and his delegation joined those who encouraged the Fund's efforts in emphasizing the link between population and environment and, in particular, its efforts to focus attention on population issues and on the link between environment and development.

89. His country was pleased to note the growing emphasis placed by UNFPA on improving the role and status of women and on such issues as maternal and child health. Effective family planning was an essential factor in protecting women's health. His delegation applauded the Fund's continuing efforts in that field, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.

90. In keeping with its belief that all people had a right to information, education and the means to decide the number and spacing of their children, his country supported the relevant activities of the Fund, and welcomed the innovative approaches taken to ensure effective community participation, particularly in India, Indonesia and the Philippines. It was to be hoped that the increasing emphasis placed on community involvement would assist in ensuring that the contraceptive technologies employed were appropriate to particular social and cultural situations.

91. His Government supported UNFPA's multi-bilateral programme, and had recently contributed to a programme in Papua New Guinea through the Fund. It was important to ensure that detailed and timely project documentation was available to enable Governments properly to appraise the viability of projects they might fund. His Government, like UNFPA, strongly condemned family planning programmes which sanctioned the violation of human rights or the use of coercion in respect of family planning programmes. It was also essential that the authorities and agencies in the recipient countries should follow internationally accepted standards and guidelines in relation to the

(Mr. Babbington, Australia)

introduction of newly developed contraceptives. Because there was much greater demand for family planning services in third-world communities than could possibly be met from the Fund's resources, it was essential for people to have free access to effective family planning information and services. To deny such access was to deny a basic human right and one of the more humane rights of a civilized society.

92. In conclusion, he said that his Government would continue to give high priority to activities in the population sector and to support UNFPA's valuable work.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.